1: Hollis G-9 (ca. 1894-1904) 1905
FL12 Masai FL12

we have here primitive and undeveloped religious sentiment where the personality of the deity is hardly separated from striking natural phenomena, or remnants of some old cultus of the heavenly bodies, mountains, and tribal deities preserved in a hazy way by a military race which had not paid much attention to religion.

The Masai believe that ordinary persons die like cattle, and they throw away their corpses to be eaten by hyænas*, in the revoltingly unceremonious way common to many East African tribes. Medicine men, however, and influential people are buried, and their souls are said to pass into snakes, which are respected in consequence. Many tribes on the Nile also reverence snakes. It is noticeable that death and misfortune are not attributed to witchcraft. The Laibon is not the same as the Witch Doctor of the Bantu tribes, and it is no part of his duties to detect witches.

As the Masai men will practically do nothing but fight or tend cattle, they are naturally dependent on others for all articles, including their arms, which cannot be manufactured by women. There is among them a special tribe of smiths, called Il-Kunono, who make iron weapons, but are treated as inferiors and not allowed to marry Masai women. A somewhat similar tribe are the Dorobo or hunters.

It would appear that the military organization, the aversion to hunting, to eating game or vegetable food, and to engaging in agriculture or any productive art are peculiarities specially developed by the Masai, though some of them have been imitated by other tribes. Another peculiarity is the shape of their houses—long low buildings constructed of poles, grass, and mud, and divided into rooms by partitions. Their other customs, however, seem to tally with those of the Latuka, Bari, and Dinka, as far as differences of residence and occupation permit. Remarkable points of agreement are the nudity of the men, the shaven heads of the women, extraction of the middle teeth of the lower jaw, resting in a standing position on one leg, drinking the blood from living animals, and spitting as a sign of affection or benediction.

Linguistic evidence points the same way, though ampler and clearer information about the languages of the Nile is desirable for purposes of comparison. It is no want of respect to the labours of Sir H. Johnston and others to say that the researches of Mr. Hollis have for the first time

* It has been suggested that this practice may be due to a desire not to contaminate the earth by burial, but Mr. Hollis could find no trace of this idea, although he carefully enquired.

[136] effected by certain restrictions, and is only suited to the dominant tribes of the mountains: while to land on coast and with given strength and courage. When cattle fail them they make raids on the tribes which they know to be in possession of herds. They say that Engai (Heaven) gave them all that exists in the way of cattle, and that no other nation ought to possess any. Wherever there is a herd of cattle, thither it is the call of the Wakuafi and Masai to proceed and seize it. Agreeably with this maxim, they undertake expeditions for hundreds of leagues to attain their object, and make forays into the territories of the Wakamba, the Galla, the Wapoggo, and even the Wanika on the sea-coast. They are dreaded as warriors, laying all waste with fire and sword, so that the weaker tribes do not venture to resist them in the open field, but leave them in possession of their herds, and seek only to save themselves by the quickest possible flight.

[111] "The weapons of the Masai and Wakuafi consist of a spear, a large, oblong shield, and a club round and thick at the top, hurling which with the greatest precision, at a distance of from fifty to seventy paces they can dash out the brains of an enemy: and it is this weapon, above all, which strikes terror into the East-Africans, the Nubian with their muskets not excepted. The Wakuafi shelter themselves behind their long shields until they become close enough to the enemy [114] to make good use of their clubs. They conquer or die, death having no terrors for them. . . . . .

"The two kindred tribes, the Wakuafi and the Masai, hate each other mortally, which is a fortunate circumstance for the weaker African tribes: since, were they united and ruled by one supreme head, there would soon be an end to the existence of the other East-African tribes, who could not possibly resist them, the savage Galla themselves not excepted: for the latter fly before the Wakuafi and Masai, and, at the most, only prove dangerous enemies to them by stratagem and cunning, but never cope with them in a fair and open field.

"As regards the physical conformation of the Masai and Wakuafi, their forms are tall and slender, with handsome and rather light-complexioned features. . . . . From their beauty of form the Masai and Wakuafi slaves, especially the young females, are much sought after by the Arabs and Nubians of the coast: and they become much attached to their Mohammedan masters, provided always, that the latter do not require from them any kind of labour which is repugnant to their habits, such as tilling the soil and similar occupations.

"The Wakuafi and Masai as pastoral tribes, consider themselves the exclusive possessors of the plains and wilderness, with their springs and rivers, and they do not attack the inhabitants of the mountains, so long as they confine themselves to their mountains, and refrain from descending into the level country to turn it to agricultural or pastoral purposes. It is said, however, that very recently they have resolved to take possession of the mountain Kadiaro[1] to facilitate their freebooting expeditions against the Galla, Wanika, and Nubian, and to exclude those tribes of the coast from access to the interior. . . . . .

Discovery of the source of the Nile

The Masai first came into prominence in connection with the development of Africa and with geographical discovery by the discovery of the source of the Nile in 1858 and by the interest then aroused in Europe, both in Uganda and in the possibilities of opening up a more direct route from the sea than that one then in use from opposite Zanzibar to the southern end of the Victoria Nyanza. To the opening of this route the most serious difficulty to be overcome was the negotiation of the country occupied by the then formidable and dreaded Masai, of whom previously all that was known was the rumour of their bravery and prowess in arms. East coast traders had repeatedly crossed Masailand, but no European had attempted the task.

Dr. Fischer's visit to Masailand.

In 1882, a German naturalist, named Dr. G. A. Fischer, was sent out by the Geographical Society of Hamburg to explore the possibilities of this route. He started from Pangani, opposite Zanzibar, with a caravan of 120 natives and porters,

[1] Now better known as Kenya.

6:Thomson K-3 (1883-1884)1887
FL12 Masai FL12

abandoned, and, though meat and milk were still the main items of his eating, he could now vary it with vegetable food, obtained by his wife from neighbouring agricultural tribes. Luxuries, also, he might now indulge in. He sported a fancy snuff-box and tobacco-box of ivory or rhinoceros' horn, and delighted to rap up its contents as he handed it to a friend. He chewed tobacco (mixed always with natron), though he never smoked. Then, as often as convenient, he liked to foregather with his friends, and have a jolly carouse over beer or mead.

It is pleasant to know that with this change in his mode of life there was a corresponding alteration (very much for the better) in his views of things. He delighted to talk with the traders whom before he had gloried in killing or annoying, and would in token of good-will cordially exchange the courtesies of life by spitting upon them and being spat upon. In his conversation he showed an intelligence far superior to any specimen of the Bantu tribes. He had no suspicions, and was communicative about his affairs and beliefs. He would even at times exercise a friendly guardianship of passing traders, and was able to ward off many a disaster by judicious warning. He was not stinted in his presents, and generally gave far more than he got. He has been known even to protect strayed porters, and tend sick men left behind.

The softening down of his ferocity reacted upon his face. The habitual scowl gradually died away, and was replaced by a more pleasing and genial expression. His thoughts turned more to the strange mystery of life. He, alas! had little that was cheering to look forward to. He believed in the existence of a Supreme Being, and yet had not the faintest conception of an after-life. Unlike the men of the Bantu races, he did not believe in ghosts or spirits. He had no theory of dreams, and did not imagine like the negro that when he dreamed he was really experiencing all that was passing through his brain, and that his soul or spirit was actually knocking around somewhere, having a good time of it, unclogged by his body. Moran believed nothing of that; indeed, whether he had any idea on the subject, I have not been able to determine. When the man died, he was finished utterly, except so far as he might go piecemeal to build up the body of a hyena, a vulture, or a marabout stork. The Masai believe in annihilation. To bury a corpse would, they think, be to poison the soil: it must be thrown to the wild beasts without ceremony.

913 931 601 *Gifts to Certain Relations.*—A somewhat similar custom is that which ordains that a grown-up son must give certain presents to all children born to his father, as follows:—

(1) To a young girl-child, either a heifer or else a young cow or young she-goat which has not yet had young. If the former present is given the child in future calls its brother (or half-brother) *lumbi*, and if either of the two latter animals is given the appropriate name is *bebee*.

(2) To a boy-child, either a heifer or a young ram or else a young cow or she-goat which has not yet had young. The following are the appropriate names by which the boy henceforward calls the man: *libabie* if the gift was a young cow, *ingisi* if the gift was a young she-goat, *ndowo* if the gift was a heifer, *olchkuna* if the gift was a young ram.

A grown-up son must also give a present to any new wife married by his father, the animal given and the name thenceforward used by the woman to the man being exactly as in the case of girl-children above.

604 *Mother's Brother.*—Among the Masai I can find no trace of any special functions of the mother's brother, and he has no special position in relation to his sister or her children.

589 *Widowhood.*—There is no idea of uncleanness attaching to widowhood, and therefore there is no ceremonial purification ceremony before sexual life can be indulged in by a widow. When a woman is left a widow she builds herself a hut [607] with one of her husband's own brothers (*i.e.* brothers by the same mother), and he becomes responsible for her welfare and acts in loco parentis to her children so far as making arrangements for initiation and marriage, etc., are concerned. In [835] no circumstances, however, may this brother or any other of her husband's own brothers have sexual intercourse with the woman. If she is still of child-bearing [954] age she is expected to go on having children (who will rank as her late husband's), and to this end she may have sexual relations with:—

589 834 (1) *Any* men of her late husband's age-group, who are not excluded by other restrictions (see above).

(2) *Any* of her late husband's half-brothers (*i.e.* brothers by a different mother).

(3) *Any* other men not otherwise excluded.

957 *Sickness.*—My informant was unwilling or unable to give me any detailed information about the treatment of sick people, save that medicines were made from the barks and seeds of various trees and from the stomach juices of slaughtered animals.

Part VII.—Death and Burial.

961 *Death.*—Death is looked upon with fear and, therefore—except in the case of very old men and women past child-bearing—every precaution is taken to avoid a

11: Leakey E-6 (no date) 1939 FL.12 Masai FL.12
Kenya

death taking place within the village. This means that as soon as a young or middle-aged person shows any signs of approaching death, he (or she) is hastily carried out into the bush outside the village and left to die there.

Should the death of a young or middle-aged person occur within the village the body must be carried out and thrown into the bush. The proper person to perform this last service is a son of the deceased, but if no son is available the body must be moved by a stranger (usually a member of the Wandorobo tribe, who is always willing to perform this work), and the fee for doing so is a heifer. The village must be moved as soon as possible after such an occurrence, but otherwise there is no particular ceremony.

Burial of Old People.—Only an old man, or a woman past child-bearing, is allowed to die peacefully in a hut in the village, and the body is then buried in the following way:—As soon as death occurs a ram or bullock is slaughtered and the hut used to contain the body and clothes (even skins) of the individual. All ornaments are removed, and the burying-place is then prepared as follows: A spot in the bush not far from the village is selected and cleared and a hollow square of rough logs is then built up. This structure is usually about four feet square and three feet high. On the ground inside the structure the deceased's sleeping-skin is placed, and on it the body is laid (with the knees sufficiently bent to fit the space). Men are placed lying on their right sides, women on their left. The body is then covered by the various skin dresses owned by the deceased and left, an attempt being made to cover over the top of the structure with wood or earth in order to protect the body from scavenging animals.

About a month after the burial has taken place the village must be moved, with the exception of the hut in which the death took place. The hut is left to fall into ruin. Meanwhile, until the move takes place, any other occupants of the hut continue to live in it as before.

Ceremony at the Burial-place.—On the day that the village is finally abandoned every member of the village must file past the burial-place and the elder people step and drink beer and slaughter an ox there. My informants, however, insist that this is not a sacrifice to the departed spirit as among some other tribes, and as proof pointed out that they did not pour out any beer at the grave or leave any offering of meat.

Inheritance.—A man's possessions all pass to his male children, but if they are too young to take charge of them themselves the deceased's own brother, who acts *in loco parentis* (see Widowhood) looks after the property for them. In return for this he is allowed to retain a very small percentage of the stock.

A man's personal ornaments are put on his various children about two months after his death, with a certain amount of ceremonial and much beer-drinking. His weapons are kept for his sons until such time as they shall require them.

764 [Obi cont.]

With one part of it they first anoint themselves, the other part they pour over the corpse, after it has been taken out of the hut and laid out on a mat's skin. Amidst the lamentations of the women re-
• [Obi] maining in the kraal, the men carry out the dead man and lay him down after a few hundred steps. The corpse is laid on its left side with the head toward the north, so that the face is turned toward the east. The legs are drawn up and lie one upon the other. The left arm is drawn up in such a way that the hand lies close in front of the head, whereas the right arm is bent at the elbow in a right angle; the upper arm rests on the abdomen of the dead man, the hand touches the ground in front of it. If one laid the dead man down in
76 any other way, according to popular belief, *[illegible]* another death would quickly occur among the offspring or other relatives of the deceased. The cause is feared if a married man dies far from his kraal, which is why a family father, if he becomes seriously ill abroad, has himself taken home as quickly as possible. In contrast to this, warriors only wish in the aforesaid death in the hut is not a proper soldier's death. Those who have fallen in battle are left lying on the spot on which they fell. In a few lineages it is customary to place the corpses of old people not simply on the ground, but in a shallow, roughlike pit at most half a meter deep, which, however, is not filled up.

764 [Obi] After the corpse has been put down outside, the men, with the eldest taking precedence, or -- if he is still a child -- the brother of the deceased, cover it with green branches, whereby each says the prayer: "Ng ai yaitai, eze kele eze jundu, enge ei ngeze nebeli, enge ei gielem, enge i yeze," i.e.: "My God, father is dead, I pray, give health, give property, give children."

In case of a woman's death, after a black ram has been quickly slaughtered, her body is anointed with fat by women who are not relatives and then carried out of the kraal; the body of a person who leaves no children is carried out of the kraal, without being anointed or other formalities, and is laid down -- as always -- a few hundred meters away. If someone dies outside the kraal, he is left lying on the spot where death overtook him, and the men present throw a few branches of grass or leaves on the corpse. Later, upon passing